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July 27, 2009

Andrew Crabtree and Envision 2040, San Jose Task Force
Department of Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement
City of San Jose
200 East Santa Clara Street
San Jose, CA 95113

RE: San Jose's 2040 Park Master Plan

Dear Mr. Crabtree and Task Force:

San Jose currently has a ratio of parks to people that is not meeting the city's standards (3.5 acres/1000 residents). Also, it is not meeting the standards put forth by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA). They recommend a ratio of 6 to 10 acres/1000 residents of "Close to Home" park space and a ratio of 15.2 acres/1000 for "Regional Space".

When I calculate the acreage of all San Jose parks on the city's current website at <http://www.sjparks.org/listofparks2a.asp>, I come up with 2558 acres of parks or 2.2% of the city's total land (177.7 sq. mi.) This calculates to .0025 acres/person or 2.5 acres/1000 with a population of 1,006,892. I did these calculations myself because the city does not make it easy to find them.

There are several districts including District 6 which have less than 2.5 acres per 1000 and others which have more so there is district disparity in the San Jose (my District 6 is one of them). I am not including the schools as parks because they should not be part of the 3.5 acre calculation. The reasons: they are reducing their open space size without public knowledge or approval, they close schools, and the city has no control over school open space.

Decisions about the future of San Jose's park system need to be done with full knowledge about the urban parks research and excellent case studies around the country. I feel this is missing in the current process. Therefore, I am providing some of this information to you.

Following are some outstanding articles for you to read:

1. California Park Inequities and Health Disparities:
http://www.tpl.org/content_documents/hphc/hphc_FactSheetEnglishupdated.pdf
2. Quantifying the Greenhouse Gas Benefits of Urban Parks:

http://www.tpl.org/tier3_cd.cfm?content_item_id=22531&folder_id=188

3. Why America Needs Urban Parks:

http://www.tpl.org/content_documents/parks_for_people_Jan2004.pdf

4. National Recreation and Parks Assoc Park Principles and Policies

<http://www.nrpa.org/Content.aspx?id=356>

5. The most prolific writer/researcher/lecturer/professor on urban parks and economics is Dr. John Crompton at Texas A&M University. I have a list of many of his articles/books which would be useful to those making decisions about the future of our parks. Some of Dr. Crompton's research and published topics are: impact of parks on property values/tax base, parks and economic development, the role of parks in business and retiree relocation, the emergence of park privatization, alternative approaches to securing parks.

6. Center for Park Excellence with the Trust for Public Land (TPL):

http://www.tpl.org/tier3_cd.cfm?content_item_id=22462&folder_id=3208

7. Brownfields to Parks (since our county has more brownfields than any other county we could create new biological businesses to clean them up and create parks on them)

http://www.tpl.org/tier2_pa.cfm?folder_id=945

8 "Urban Parks and Open Space", a 1997 book with various authors including TPL and the Urban Land Institute available through Amazon. It has some excellent case studies.

9. "Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder" by Richard Louv. This is a book about the human costs of alienation from nature. The cover states: "this is the first book to bring together cutting-edge research showing that direct exposure to nature is essential for healthy childhood development – physical, emotional, and spiritual. Nature is a potent therapy for depression, obesity, and ADD. Environment-based education dramatically improves standardized test scores and grade point averages and develops skills in problem solving, critical thinking, and decision making. Even creativity is stimulated by childhood experiences in nature." There is not enough untouched natural spaces in each San Jose district.

10. There are many different ways to purchase park land which San Jose is not discussing. Following are some of them:

- a. Public-private partnerships
- b. Clean-up superfund sites creating new bio-remediation businesses which are needed all over the country.
- c. Trades of land (both private and public open space). State law requires that they must first offer land to local governments at reduced prices. Given the need for more public land, no public land should be sold to the private sector. The Trust for Public Land has a national organization to stop this. Work with the communities to ensure that such large parcels as the Fairgrounds is not sold to developers.
- d. Lease public land to obtain funds to purchase as was done at San Francisco's Yerba Buena Gardens.

- e. Bonds/Initiatives (most everyone will vote for parks).
- f. Trusts (like the Trust for Public Land or family trusts) and Foundations.
- g. Neighborhoods and individuals taking responsibility for parks.
- h. Theme and cultural parks paid for by interested parties.
- i. Collect funds from developers to purchase future large parcels of land. The developer small pocket parks are not supplying all the open space needs of the population increase they are creating.

Following are some good books on this subject:

- 1. "Saving Open Space: The Politics of Local Preservation in California" by Daniel Press (UC Santa Cruz Professor, a very good speaker)
- 2. "Holding Our Ground: Protecting America's Farms and Farmland" by Tom Daniels and Deborah Bosers
- 3. "Edens Lost and Found: How Ordinary Citizens are Restoring Our Great American Cities" by Harry Wiland and Dale Bell
- 4. There are also excellent specific case studies on parks which we can learn from. Are we studying them to make our park system better?

10. I have attached a list of the Ahwahane Smart Growth Principles for urban open space. We are not following many of them. Following are some of the important ones which need to be addressed in looking at the future of our park system:

- a. The community should have an ample supply of specialized open spaces; density is balanced by grand open space (farmland, forest, parks, and riparian corridors) that remain unbuilt and that provide access to nature for residents;
- b. The natural terrain, drainage, and vegetation of the community should be preserved with superior examples in the parks and greenbelts;
- c. Encourage the development of local character and community identity and preservation of history.

Examples of these ideas in our parks would include: a botanical garden for our ecosystem (every major U.S. city has one), a Valley agricultural history garden and agriculture land in each district, cultural and historical gardens, children's gardens for children to be in nature and create their own play (not just tot lots), native plants in all parks, a large park for each district, widening parks along creek trails.

Sincerely yours,

Kathryn Mathewson, environmental planner/designer, ecologist/botanist

Resident District 6, Owner Secret Gardens

Note: Attached are the following: Useful articles and books for San Jose parks, talk by Dr. John Crompton (economist and parks planner/researcher) to SF Parks Dept., Ahwahane Smart Growth Principles relating to parks and open space